

“The Time Had Come”  
Rev. Susan M. Prichard  
December 6, 2009  
Luke 3: 1-6

This is the Second Sunday of Advent and time for John the Baptist to make his annual appearance, reminding us that the time to repent is at hand.

Luke 3:1-6

In the second year, when Barack Obama was President, and Jodi Rell was governor of Connecticut, and Tim LeGeyt represented Canton in the legislature, and Sue Prichard was the Interim Minister at the Canton Center Church, the word of God came to the people of Canton. And that word came from the Gospel of St. Luke telling us that John the son of Zechariah, was preaching in the wilderness. And he went all along the region of the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

One of the things that I love about the gospel of Luke is that Luke gives you information about the ‘when’ and ‘wheres’; the ‘who’ and ‘whats’ of a text. We know when it first took place. We know who was in charge of the government and who was leading the worshippers and who gave us the message and to which prophet it referred. There’s nothing wishy-washy about Luke or about John in this text. The time and place are clear and so is John’s message.

One of the commentators noted: “All those details, those names and dates, are possibly the most important part of the passage, not because they tell us that something happened in the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius, but that something is happening as we speak and listen, as we sing and pray, as we announce the upcoming potluck and Mary’s recovery from surgery, as we share coffee and donuts and news after the service today.

“In other words, they are there to tell us that God is working when God always works: in the present. In our present. And our work is to be present...to be present to God and to our work with God.” (Minister’s Manual, p.160)

If we were to read on in the text, we would hear John telling the people to get their lives in order because “the time had come”. John’s job was to prepare the people for the coming of salvation—for the messiah—who would bring about the Reign of God.

John lived and preached in the desert, a fair distance from the cities where the people lived. But John’s reputation was so great that people made the journey to find him and hear what he had to say. He told them to repent of their sins—to change the way they were living—and to be baptized so they would be ready when the Messiah finally arrived.

The story of John is such a great story for Advent. Advent is about taking the time to get ready for the coming of Jesus.

Some of us will use that time to send Christmas cards, buy presents, clean and decorate our homes. But there's more to 'preparing the way' than that. We need to prepare our hearts, to make room in our busy lives, to let Jesus in.

'Preparing' isn't about remembering something that happened in the past to people who lived 'once upon a time'. Preparing is getting ready to receive Jesus right now—this Advent season—this year. What tasks and relationships and transformations is God inviting us to in 2009? What mountain (or molehill) of misunderstanding can be lowered right now? What valley of despair or disillusionment or need can be filled in right now?

We don't need a special invitation to do good for God, but today, we get one anyway. John blasts into our quiet, well ordered worship and tells us to fix things and get ready, to prepare the way. Even if it means lowering mountains, filling in valleys, straightening roadways and getting a little wet.

Advent is the time; and the time is now.

Thanks be to God. Amen.